

## Hebrew department pulls 2010 Allen Griffin Award

By Brian Lamar, Strategic Communications



*The Director of Grants and Donor Advised Services, Jackie Wendland (Left), hands over the Allen Griffin Award to Yaniv Oded (Right).*

PRESIDIO OF MONTEREY, Calif. - Twenty five years ago, an Israeli guidance counselor diagnosed Yaniv Oded, the son of Iraqi immigrants, as dyslexic, predicting that he would not be able to do well in language classes.

After almost getting kicked out of school as a child for flunking Arabic, young Oded made a vow to himself that he was not going to let anyone tell him that learning languages was a skill that he could not master.

Oded has recently been awarded with an Allen Griffin Award, Monterey County's highest teaching award, and is working on his fourth year as a Hebrew Language Instructor at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center.

Since his meeting with the discouraging counselor, Oded has mastered Arabic, English, French, Hebrew, Spanish and Turkish. Oded went on to start a career in linguistics when he joined the Israeli Defense Force and worked for five years as a linguist analyst in service to Israel. Oded has also made a profession of language instruction having taught Arabic and French before coming to

DLIFLC to teach Hebrew.

Oded first signed on to teach Hebrew at DLIFLC as a contractor. "They gave me a six-month contract and when that was finished, I signed another one. After working as a contract language instructor for that long, I decided that I needed something more permanent," said Oded.

It didn't take long for Oded to realize that the students he was teaching were a unique group. "The troops are inspiring people. Many of these students made a decision to do something better for themselves. They choose to do this for their country," said Oded.

Oded also realized that he had walked into a job that put just as much investment into its faculty, as it does its students. "DLI encouraged and sponsored me to study after hours and helped me go to CSUMB for a second Masters degree in Instructional Science and Technology," Oded explained, referring to California State University Monterey Bay.

Oded has taken his newly gained knowledge and has put it to use in his school. While at CSUMB,

Oded's capstone project was to develop an application designed to streamline administrative procedures at DLIFLC, which has already proved to save time and money.

"With this new application, we have no misplaced documents, greater security and privacy controls because the system is Common Access Card enabled and we are looking at a 15 percent decrease in time spent waiting on documents to go through the normal distribution system," Oded explained.

Oded is also successfully experimenting with classroom curriculum by incorporating online/real-time interaction, taking his classrooms on virtual field trips, building an electronic portfolio systems for student documents and turning a series of popular games like Jeopardy and Snakes and Ladders into electronic versions.

"While studying at CSUMB we focused on interacting modules and e-learning. That gave me the ideas for some of my latest developments in our school," said Oded, adding that he was also experimenting with electronic testing platforms.

"I feel comfortable being creative here at DLI. The leadership is very supportive and I get all the support and resources I need to fulfill my project ideas," said Oded.

Although the Allen Griffin award is Oded's highest teaching honor thus far, the team he heads has won the Team Excellence Award twice, he was awarded two Coins of Excellence and he was elected as the Faculty Advisory Council President for his school.

"I think of these awards as less of an individual award and more of an institution award because I could not have achieved anything without the support of my coworkers and supervisors," Oded said.